

A sepia-toned photograph of a crowd of people. Many hands are raised in the air, some holding a small American flag. The image has a warm, historical feel. The text is overlaid in the lower-middle section.

People want government programs
to be accountable for achieving results.

Efficient governance in a democracy

The American ideal is an efficient, responsive, thrifty government that provides all the services citizens need, paid for with the lowest possible taxes. In the past few years, however, the civic conversation has been mainly focused on only half of this picture - the half about taxes.

We have had a series of tax-reducing initiatives, driven by the belief that it is possible to cut taxes without cutting necessary services. Many people believe that governments at every level can balance their budgets by minimizing administrative expenses, reducing fraud and abuse, and becoming more efficient. People also want government programs to be accountable for achieving results rather than just following rules or generating red tape.

Focusing on Results • These are things that governments ought to do regardless of the budget climate. In fact, these goals are an important part of daily life at DSHS. In pursuit of these goals, the department has developed an Accountability Scorecard to track its progress towards specific outcomes.

State government
is holding itself
accountable as
never before

Digital State Survey: Using technology to improve delivery of social services

2000			2001			2002		
State	Rank	Score	State	Rank	Score	State	Rank	Score
Washington	1	100	Washington	1	100	Washington	1	100
Kansas	2	88.9	Kansas	1	100	Arizona	1	100
Utah	3	74.1	Maine	3	95.83	Kansas	1	100
New Jersey	4	70.4	Minnesota	3	95.83	Michigan	1	100
Alaska	5	66.7	Florida	5	91.67	Virginia	1	100
Texas	5	66.7	Nebraska	5	91.67	Maine	4	95.2
Arkansas	7	63.0	South Dakota	5	91.67	Illinois	4	90.5
South Dakota	7	63.0	Arizona	8	87.50	Maryland	4	90.5
Massachusetts	9	59.3	Michigan	8	87.50	Missouri	4	90.5
Nebraska	9	59.3	Wisconsin	8	87.50	Nebraska	4	90.5
Pennsylvania	9	59.3	Illinois	11	83.33	Utah	4	90.5

Source: A comprehensive study by the Center for Digital Government, Government Technology magazine, and the Progress and Freedom Foundation

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DSHS administrators are also being held to a new and higher standard of personal accountability for achieving specific goals. A Performance Agreement between the Secretary of DSHS and the Governor sets specific goals that the Secretary is required to meet. Similar agreements hold other DSHS leaders accountable for controlling costs and improving programs.

The DSHS Accountability Scorecard tracks progress toward specific and measurable goals

Results are reported to the public, the Governor and the Legislature, and are available on the DSHS Web site at <http://www.wa.gov/dshs/geninfo/pdf/dshscard0202.pdf>

Health and Safety of Washington's Children
Goal: <i>The health of Washington's children is maintained or improved.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reduce deaths of infants (deaths per 1,000 births)• Reduce the death rate for African-American and American-Indian infants (deaths per 1,000 births)• Reduce death rate for children who use DSHS services (deaths per 100,000 children ages 1 through 9 who received a DSHS service)• Increase number of children receiving health coverage
Goal: <i>Children in DSHS care or referred to DSHS are safe from abuse and neglect.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quickly investigate claims of child abuse and neglect
Goal: <i>DSHS services help children experience stable lives.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase number of adoptions for children in DSHS care
Economic Development and Self-Sufficiency
Goal: <i>DSHS clients who are able to work are employed.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase the number of adults leaving welfare who earn better wages• Increase percent of adults on welfare who are working, looking for work, or preparing for work
Goal: <i>DSHS clients live as independently as possible.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase number of low-income frail elderly and persons with disabilities who receive assistance in their own homes or home-like settings• Increase percent of adults with developmental disabilities or mental illness who are employed
Goal: <i>DSHS services reduce future costs to society.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase number of people completing drug and alcohol treatment
Public Trust
Goal: <i>DSHS manages its programs more effectively.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase collections/recoveries of vendor overpayments• Increase monies recouped through estate recovery
Goal: <i>Find and minimize fraud and error.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify, recover and avoid costs due to fraud and incorrect billings
Goal: <i>Information about services is clear and available.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase the number of DSHS clients who report that the information they received was clear and available
Goal: <i>Treat people with courtesy and respect.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase the number of DSHS clients reporting that DSHS treats them with courtesy and respect• Increase percent of DSHS contractors reporting that DSHS treats them with courtesy and respect

Efficient governance in a democracy

This emphasis on accountability also affects the thousands of hospitals, doctors, local community agencies, mental health clinics, home care providers, child care providers and others who provide services in partnership with DSHS. A full 70 percent of the DSHS budget goes to these contracted partners.

Monitoring these contracts to assure that quality services are provided and that billings are accurate requires careful and continuous administrative oversight. DSHS works hard to prevent, identify and pursue fraudulent or erroneous benefits claims and billings. New computer software has brought a higher level of efficiency and sophistication to this endeavor, and the federal General Accounting Office has recognized DSHS as a national leader in this field. In every program area, DSHS quality assurance teams ensure that people get the benefits they qualify for, and that vendors provide the services they are paid to provide.

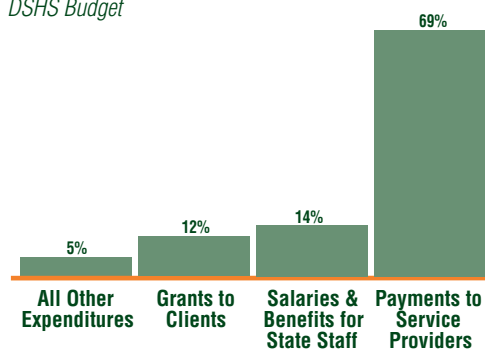
It is time to connect the questions of how much we are willing to pay in taxes and what we want government to do.

This relentless focus on improving quality, reducing costs, minimizing fraud and error, and achieving results is truly changing the culture of DSHS, and has resulted in both significant cost savings and better service for clients. However, the savings achieved through these efficiencies are overwhelmed by growth in demand for human services and double-digit inflation in medical costs.

That's why it is so important to reconnect the public debate about how much we are willing to pay in taxes, and what we want government to do. Citizens need to know what their tax dollars are buying so that they can help their elected representatives make good choices about what to cut, what to protect, and what policy directions to pursue.

Most of DSHS's budget goes to service providers such as hospitals and child care centers

DSHS Budget



Source: 2001-2003 DSHS Budget After the Supplemental